



## India's transformation over past 12 years extraordinary: LG Sinha

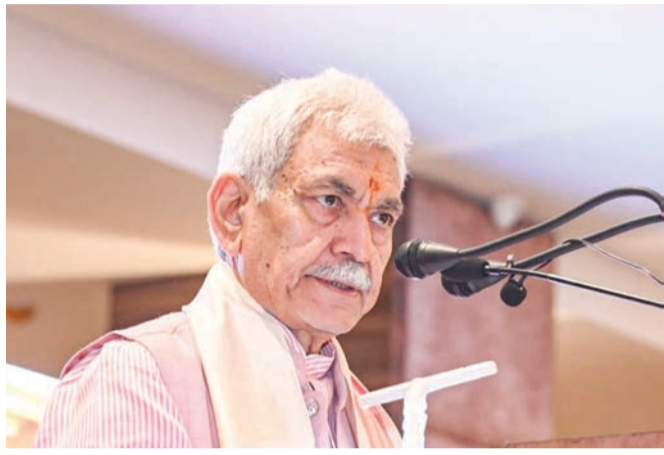
### Says J&K's culture, spiritual treasures will play vital role in shaping brighter future for all

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 31: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday said the culture and spiritual treasures of Jammu and Kashmir will play a vital role in shaping a brighter future for all.

"Jammu's soil brims with rich traditions. Dogri songs weaving life's values, crafts embedding experiences, art infused with devotion are our vibrant legacies breathing new life," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The LG was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of "Jammu Kashmir Cultural Festival", organised by Shri Kailakh Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust, in Jammu. Anant Shri Vibhushit Junapeethadheeshwar Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Pujyapad Shri Swami Avdheshanand



Giri Ji Maharaj also graced the occasion.

The Lieutenant Governor said the Jammu Kashmir Cultural Festival aims to preserve the rich heritage, recommit to folk arts, spiritual foundations,

traditions, and strengthen our identity. "I am confident traditional performances will enliven the atmosphere with colour and melody, cultural displays will carry our priceless legacy to all, and farmer awareness

programs will honour the hands nourishing this Union Territory's soul," he said.

He observed that the emerging India's duty is to empower our knowledge economy and to propagate innovations, cultural values, and philosophical ideas globally. "In this defining moment as global strife fractures societies and humanity quests for peace, India stands tall to illuminate a new path for the world. We are heirs to a civilisation that lit lamps of knowledge, culture, and spirituality across continents millennia ago," he said.

The LG said that the world awaits fresh ideas, and youth inherit the tradition of birthing transformative thought. He called upon the youth to return to their roots, cultivate new ideas and | [More on P6](#)

## India stands resolute under PM Modi's leadership: LG Sinha

### 'Amid global conflicts, humanity must draw lessons from Lord Mahavira's teachings'



KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 31: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday attended the Mahavir Jayanti, a special event organised by S.S. Jain Sabha, to celebrate Mahavir Jayanti, at Jammu. He extended felicitations and best wishes to all on the auspicious occasion.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor spoke on Lord Mahavira's teachings of Ahimsa and Anekantavada, emphasising right faith, knowledge,

and conduct in today's world, which urgently needs compassion, peace, and brotherhood.

"Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, India stands resolute today. He has laid the foundation for a powerful nation, which is inspiring the world with its message that true peace is not weakness but unwavering courage, and this is a time to build bridges, not battlefields," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor

said that amid global conflicts and strife, humanity must draw lessons from Lord Mahavira's teachings, which foster enduring peace and unbreakable brotherhood.

"True progress stems from responsibility and accountability for one's actions. To envision a better future, we must bridge divides among people, fostering trust through understanding diverse cultures, ideas, and experiences," he said.

The LG observed that Lord Mahavira | [More on P6](#)

## Govt colleges in J&K face 'no takers' crisis

- 2 colleges with zero students
- 5 colleges with fewer than 20 students
- 8 colleges with fewer than 30 students
- 14 colleges with under 50 students
- 24 colleges with fewer than 100 students
- 13 colleges with 100-300 students

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Mar 31: In a blow to government plans of bringing higher education to doorsteps, there are 'no takers' of the government colleges in Jammu and Kashmir that are facing dismal student enrolment.

"At present, Government Degree College Baghi Dilawar Khan and Government Degree College Chattisinghpura have no active student enrolment, as the previous enrolment levels were not adequate to sustain a viable academic environment and the institutions have not attracted sufficient student admissions," the government said.

It also said "GDC Chattisinghpura and GDC Baghi Dilawar Khan are | [More on P6](#)

## Govt committed to fill 25,000 vacancies this year: CM

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Mar 31: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said the government is determined to fill 25,000 vacancies this year.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly during Question Hour, the Chief Minister emphasised that the government is firm in its resolve to complete the recruitment process within the year.

"This matter has been discussed several times during this session, including during the discussions on the LG's speech, the budget, and grants," he said while responding to questions from MLA Pulwama, Waheed-ur-Rehman Para, as per news agency—Kashmir News



Observer (KNO).

The Chief Minister further said the government is keen to ensure the recruitment process remains transparent and time-bound.

"Time-bound does not mean that the process should be conducted | [More on P6](#)

### Surprising move: Omar on security withdrawal from NC HQ

Waris Fayaz

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday expressed concern over the withdrawal of security from the National Conference headquarters, Nawa-e-Subh, in Srinagar, terming the move "quite surprising" in the backdrop of a recent attack on the NC President Dr Farooq Abdullah. Speaking on the issue, the Chief Minister, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the decision to scale down security came at a time when people across the region were condemning | [More on P6](#)

## High-risk glacial lakes identified in Kashmir Himalaya

### Govt outlines preparedness measures

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Mar 31: Minister for Relief and Disaster Management on Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that a recent study has identified high-risk glacial lakes in Kashmir Himalayas.

The Minister, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a recent scientific study conducted by the University of Kashmir has identified a number of glacial lakes in the Kashmir Himalaya with varying levels of susceptibility to Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).

The Minister, while replying to a question by MLA Tanvir Sadiq, said, "The study carried out by researchers from the Department of Geo-informatics

and published in the reputed Journal of Glaciology, examined 155 glacial lakes using hydrogeomorphic indicators such as lake expansion rates, dam stability, and surrounding environmental conditions. Based on these parameters, five lakes—Bramsar Lake, Chirsar Lake, Nundkol Lake, Gangabal Lake and Bhagsar Lake—have been categorized under the "very high susceptibility" class relative to others in the region."

However, the Minister clarified that such classification does not indicate immediate danger. "A lake marked as highly susceptible does not mean it is currently unstable or on the verge of breaching. It only implies that under certain triggering conditions, it may be more prone to an outburst | [More on P6](#)

### BREIF NEWS

#### LG condoles loss of lives in Tawi drowning incident

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha expressed deep anguish and grief over the tragic loss of young lives in an unfortunate drowning incident in the River Tawi at Nagrota. He spoke to the senior officials and took stock of the ongoing search and rescue operations. "The loss of | [More on P6](#)

#### 64 Private Member Bills listed for today

As many as 64 Private Member Bills are listed in the business of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Wednesday. According to the list of business circulated by the Assembly Secretariat, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), 64 bills have been scheduled for introduction in the House tomorrow. All | [More on P6](#)

#### Members withdraw resolutions after govt assurances

Legislators, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), Justice Hasnain Masoodi and Mubarak Gul withdrew their respective resolutions after assurances by the government. Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi) moved a resolution which read, "This House | [More on P6](#)

### BUDGET SESSION

## Rs 18,382 cr liabilities cleared, CM Omar tells Assembly

Assures regular settlement of bills

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 31: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday informed the House that bills amounting to 12,561.31 crore under various heads, including gratuity, commutation, leave salary and contractor payments, have been cleared up to March 27, 2026, while GPF bills worth 5,821.43 crore have been settled up to December 31, 2025.

The CM was replying to a question raised by legislator



Sham Lal Sharma during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

### Govt to prioritise recruitment to fill up vacancies in depts: Omar

KT News Desk

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday informed the House that as many as 48,958 non-gazetted and 10,217 gazetted posts—across both direct recruitment and promotion quotas—are lying vacant in 38 government departments. He was replying | [More on P6](#)

## Snowfall, rain disrupt life across J&K

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Mar 31: Higher reaches of Kashmir received fresh snowfall while plains witnessed widespread rainfall on Tuesday, leading to a drop in temperatures and disruption in road connectivity, officials said.

Snowfall was reported from Tulail Valley, Razdan Pass and Sadhna Top in Kupwara district, while several parts of the Valley recorded moderate to heavy rainfall over the past 24 hours.

According to data available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Baramulla recorded the

highest rainfall at 73 mm, followed by Poonch in Jammu region at 68.5 mm. Other major stations included Qazigund (48.6 mm), Kupwara (40.8 mm), Kulgam (42.2 mm), and Srinagar (31.6 mm). Jammu city recorded 12 mm of rainfall.

The Meteorological Centre Srinagar said erratic weather conditions are expected to continue till April 10, with intermittent spells of rain and snow likely across the Union Territory.

"Between March 31 and April 2, brief spells of light rain or snow may occur at isolated places, particularly towards late afternoons. From April 3 to 4, | [More on P6](#)

## Legislators raise public issues during Zero Hour

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 31: Several members of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Tuesday raised pressing public concerns during Zero Hour, drawing government attention towards critical gaps in healthcare, education, infrastructure, public utilities and administrative functioning across their constituencies.

MLA Shagun Parihar highlighted the issue of vacant administrative posts at District Hospital Kishtwar, stressing the urgent need for specialists such as an anaesthetist and a

## '3442 raids, 2443 complaints redressed, fuel stocks adequate in J&K'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Jammu, Mar 31: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday said petrol, diesel and LPG stocks are adequate, with 3,442 inspections and raids conducted since March 17 to curb hoarding and black marketing.

Replying to a Calling Attention Motion in the Legislative Assembly, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Satish Sharma as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said 252 goods/articles have been seized, 2,443 complaints

redressed and FIRs lodged against violators.

He said the earlier spike in consumption was due to panic buying triggered by geopolitical tensions, but asserted that there are currently no reports of panic buying or rumours, with all communication channels being actively monitored.

"As per daily reports from Oil Marketing Companies, availability of petrol, diesel and LPG is adequate across J&K," he said, urging the public to ignore rumours as supply remains stable.

The Minister said Divisional and District | [More on P6](#)

## J&K has sufficient stock of petroleum products: Sharma

Urges public to ignore rumours

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 31: Minister for Food, Civil supply and Consumer Affairs, Satish Sharma on Tuesday informed the House that the Department is maintaining regular monitoring of availability and distribution of LPG and Petroleum products across Jammu and Kashmir.

"As per the daily stock position reports furnished by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), the availability of Petrol, Diesel and LPG is adequate as on date, with availability of petroleum products" maintained the Minister.

The Minister was replying to the Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that geopolitical tensions have triggered panic buying and spike in Petrol, Diesel and LPG consumption beyond normal levels. He gave out that as per the report furnished by the Oil Marketing Companies, stocks are adequate, urging the public to ignore rumours, as the overall supply remains stable and sufficient despite the temporary surge in demand.

Satish Sharma said that the Divisional and District Level Control Rooms are in place and functional. He said that the department is conducting regular inspections across the districts to strictly check and prevent any instance of hoarding and black marketing. The government is taking | [More on P6](#)



radiologist to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services.

MLA Irfan Hafiz Lone called for the extension of the Power

Amnesty Scheme for another year to provide relief to consumers and prevent power disconnections. | [More on P6](#)

## Budget Session 2026 Calling Attention Motion

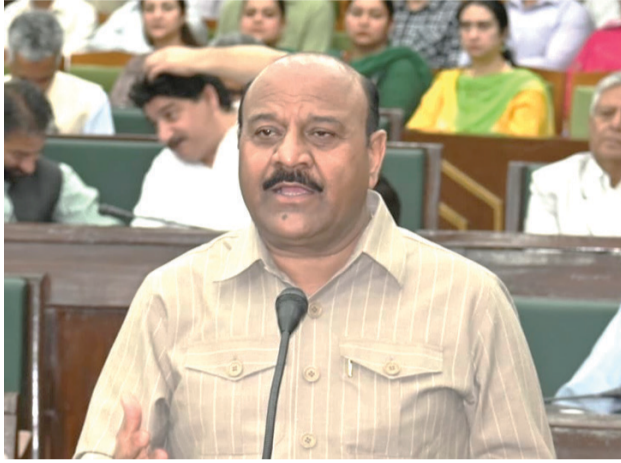
# 4 red category units functional in IE Udhampur: Deputy CM

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 31: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary Tuesday informed the House that a total of four units falling under Red category are functional in Industrial Estate (IE) Battal Ballian Udhampur on 51.7 Kanals of land with employment for 172 persons under these units.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator R S Pathania in the Legislative Assembly Tuesday.

He added that these units are functioning with properly installed Pollution Control Devices and emissions are well within the prescribed limits, with Divisional Officer, Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee (JK PCC) Udhampur



ensuring proper monitoring. The Deputy Chief Minister also informed the House that a unit can only operate in the industrial estate/private land after obtaining the required 'Consent to Operate' certificate (category based) from Pollution Control

Committee based on the norms/rules/guidelines with respect to environment, in vogue. He further said that closure order for one red category unit namely 'M/s Super Refineries' has been issued by the Member Secretary, JK PCC.

## School timings revised in Kashmir division from today

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAR 30: The Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) issued an order revising school timings for all government and recognized private institutions in Kashmir division with effect from April 1. As per the order, as per an official statement, schools falling in the Srinagar municipal limits will now function from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Whereas the schools falling outside the municipal limits of the Srinagar district and other areas of Kashmir division will observe timings from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM. The order, bearing number 119-DSEK of 2026 dated 30.03.2026 directs all the concerned institutions to strictly adhere to the revised timings without any deviation.

# Div Com Kashmir reviews availability of essential commodities in valley

## 'Ensure home delivery of LPG cylinders and take strict action against unauthorized spot deliveries

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MARCH 31: To ensure uninterrupted availability of essential commodities across the Kashmir Valley, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Tuesday chaired a high-level review meeting to assess stock positions and streamline supply mechanisms.

The meeting emphasized enhancing public interface systems to enable more efficient monitoring and assessment of demand and supply trends.

Deputy Commissioners from across the Valley, the Additional Commissioner Kashmir, Assistant Commissioner Central, representatives from medical institutions, universities, Agriculture Department, and sales officers from oil marketing companies—including Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL)—attended the meeting.

During the review, the Divisional Commissioner, as per an official statement, assessed the availability of petroleum products and LPG across districts and company depots.

On the occasion, the Joint Director, Food, Civil Supplies



and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), informed that the combined stock position of oil companies for Motor Spirit (MS) is 6,919 KL, sufficient for approximately 13.6 days, High-Speed Diesel (HSD) is 12,980 KL, sufficient for approximately 18.5 days and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is 4,371 MT, sufficient for approximately 15.6 days.

Regarding foodgrain reserves at Food Corporation of India (FCI) depots, it was informed that the stocks are sufficient for 65 days.

On the status of eKYC

verification for LPG consumers, it was reported that 1,107,947 verifications have been completed, while 8,77,145 cases remain pending. The Divisional Commissioner directed concerned agencies to expedite the completion of pending eKYC processes within a stipulated timeframe while availing the services of CSCs.

He also instructed oil companies to ensure home delivery of LPG cylinders and take strict action against unauthorized spot deliveries. Additionally, he directed

the operation of the Pampore HPCL plant on Sundays to meet peak demand requirements.

To improve inventory accuracy, the Divisional Commissioner called for immediate reconciliation of discrepancies between physical stock at distribution agencies and system records maintained by oil marketing companies. He further urged Deputy Commissioners to ensure adequate supply of commercial LPG to industries and institutions like SKIMS, GMC, Hospitals, SKUAST-K, KU, CUK and other educational institutions.

The Joint Director Agriculture also briefed the meeting on fertilizer availability, stating that sufficient stocks are in place for the upcoming Kharif season and are being regularly replenished.

Meanwhile, the Divisional Commissioner stressed the need to safeguard the interests of workers in industrial and service sectors, directing authorities to ensure that labourers are neither laid off nor deprived of timely wages.

He also instructed FCS&CA officials to compile and analyze supply and demand data from the past 15 days to identify consumption trends and support informed decision-making.

# RAMP Scheme: CS reviews impact of MSME Health Clinic

## 'Plan extensive physical outreach programmes in collaboration with IIM Jammu'

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 31: The Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting of the Industries & Commerce Department to assess the progress and impact of the MSME Health Clinic established under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme, aimed at revitalizing stressed and sick industrial units across Jammu and Kashmir.

Emphasizing the need for a robust and result-oriented approach, the Chief Secretary, as per an official statement, directed the department to optimally leverage available institutional and human resources. He stressed that, in addition to technical support from Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu, the department should actively utilize the expertise of Functional Managers, resources from the Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI), and faculty and students from universities across the Union Territory.

He underscored the importance of constituting multidisciplinary teams comprising professionals and trained interns to carry out a structured assessment of MSMEs. These teams, he noted, should initially undertake virtual evaluations followed by field visits for on-the-spot assessment and advisory support to units requiring intervention. He also called for the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tools to streamline the diagnostic process and determine the severity and nature of interventions required.

The Chief Secretary further advised the department to set realistic daily and monthly targets to ensure timely outreach to MSMEs, either through digital platforms or physical visits. He stressed



that each unit should be systematically evaluated and categorized as stable, stressed, or sick, followed by the provision of appropriate advisory and financial assistance in coordination with Jammu & Kashmir Bank to facilitate their stabilization and revival.

Highlighting the need for innovative financial solutions, he suggested exploring collaboration with J&K Bank for addressing financial stress among MSMEs, including examining possibilities of loan restructuring in line with the bank's internal policies and regulatory framework.

The Chief Secretary also emphasized aligning insights generated from the MSME Health Clinic with the evolving Industrial Policy of Jammu and Kashmir. He observed that data and findings from enterprise-level assessments could be effectively utilized to fine-tune policy incentives, ensuring a more evidence-based and targeted approach to industrial support.

He further directed the department to plan extensive physical outreach programmes in collaboration with IIM Jammu and leverage the Small Business Development Units (SBDUs) under Mission YUVA for organizing workshops and providing expert guidance to MSMEs. He urged the management of IIM Jammu to play a proactive role

in transforming the MSME Health Clinic into a model initiative in the region.

On this occasion, the Director, IIM Jammu, B S Sahay, suggested developing comprehensive informational material, including pamphlets outlining standard operating procedures, dos and don'ts, and key diagnostic parameters for MSME assessment. He assured full institutional support in terms of training human resources and constituting dedicated teams to accelerate the implementation of the initiative.

During the meeting, Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh, informed that a total of 3,968 MSMEs have registered on the Health Clinic portal so far. He stated that Phase I and Phase II of the initiative have been successfully completed, with 1,238 enterprises digitally assessed. Of these, 994 units (80.29%) were found to be stable, 237 units (19.14%) were identified as stressed, and 7 units were categorized as sick.

He further informed that verification of MSME credentials is being carried out in coordination with J&K Bank to enhance outreach and increase registrations. Additionally, chatbot-based support systems are being developed to provide real-time

assistance and guidance to MSMEs.

Director Industries & Commerce, Jammu, Arun Manhas, apprised that the initiative has covered 12 districts so far, with 162 online interactions already completed. The remaining cases are expected to be finalized shortly. He added that 14 units have been identified for targeted rehabilitation, with field visits conducted to validate assessments and extend on-ground support.

Highlighting the ongoing Phase III, he informed that 1,544 MSMEs have been digitally assessed, out of which 1,309 units (84.47%) were categorized as stable, 229 units (14.83%) as stressed, and 6 units as sick.

It was also noted that in-depth diagnostic studies and structured interviews of the 229 stressed MSMEs will commence shortly, marking a transition from broad-based assessments to focused, case-specific interventions aimed at revival and capacity enhancement.

It is worth mentioning here that the MSME Health Clinic initiative under the RAMP scheme represents a strategic intervention by the Government of India to enable early identification of stress, provide expert diagnostics, and facilitate structured revival pathways for struggling enterprises, thereby fostering a resilient and competitive MSME ecosystem.

# JAMMU AND KASHMIR BOARD OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Office Jammu: In the Premises of Govt. Polytechnic, Bikram Chowk, Jammu 180004

Office Srinagar: Block A old Secretariat, Srinagar-190001

Website: [www.jkbote.ac.in](http://www.jkbote.ac.in)

Email: [Secretary.jkbote@jk.gov.in](mailto:Secretary.jkbote@jk.gov.in)

Subject: Admission Notification for Three year Diploma Polytechnic Courses-2026 (including Diploma in Medical Lab Technology)

Notification No. 14-BOTE of 2026

Dated: 30-03-2026

Online Application are invited for residents of J&K and Ladakh who are eligible and desirous for seeking admission in Three Year Diploma Polytechnic (Engineering and Non Engineering Programmers) in all the Govt./Private Polytechnics of J&K and Ladakh for academic session 2026-2027. The selection of the candidates for all the courses except Medical Laboratory Technology MLT Shall be purely on the marks obtained in 10TH class and whereas for Medical Laboratory Technology MLT merit shall be based on 12th class Medical, The details and guidelines as contained in the Electronic Information Brochure-2026 are available at <http://jkbote.ac.in>

Online Application forms:

Candidates can submit their Applications via Online mode only On the JKBOTE's official website <http://jkbote.ac.in> from 01-04-2026 to 30-04-2026 and also pay a Fee Of Rs. 200 (Rupees Two Hundred Only) online through

Two hundred only) online through National Credit Card/Debit Card/Net Banking/or by UPI mode etc. The procedure for Ming Application Form and eligibility etc. of the candidate.; has been given in detail in the Information Brochure, which is available on the official website.

Eligibility:

1. The Applicant must:

be a Domicile Certificate Holder of J&K or of Ladakh, as the case may be; have passed 10th Class Examination form a recognized Board/Institution for all Polytechnic Courses and for Diploma in Medical lab Technology where the applicant should have passed 10+2 (Higher Secondary part II i.e. 12th Class with Physics, Chemistry & Biology as subjects); Have obtained not less than 35% of marks In aggregate in the qualifying examination.

(Note: The candidates who have appeared in 10th /12th class examination may also apply and the marks certificates on the portal need to be uploaded as and when available)

Submission of Online Application Forms:

The interested candidates have to upload the following scanned original / self- attested Certificates in JPEG format with size not less than 50K13 along with the Application Form:-

- Recent Passport Size Photograph
- Domicile Certificate of candidate belonging to AK or Ladakh, as the case may be;
- Qualifying marks certificate (10th class marks card for Diploma Polytechnic and 12th Class (Medical) mark card for Medical Lab Technology course
- Reserved Category Certificate If any, (Including Sports Certificate/TFW certificate on the Govt. Prescribed Performa. (Duly renewed where ever applicable Prescribed Performa.
- Disability Certificate, In case of Persons with Disability, issued by the concerned authority.

Help Desk:

Applicants can also contact the Help Desk of JKBOTE on Mobile 9419147552/7006163952, for any assistance/guidance in this regard.

The applicants are advised to fill the Online Application Forms on their own or through a responsible person and ensure all the correct details of the candidate and documents are submitted. The applicant must go through the Information Brochure. The information Brochure is available on the official web site <https://jkbote.ac.in>.

Note: The online submitted form is purely provisional and is liable to be cancelled at any stage subject to the final verification of the documents and even at any stage where such a document is found to be fake/false. Submission of application form does not give right to the applicant for any seat allocation in a Polytechnic college. The final seat allocation is subject to merit, intake capacity and reservation norms.

Conversion factor for CGPA to percentage shall be 9.5 uniform across all the applications received. If conversion factor of qualifying Board is different, the same shall be communicated to the Board authorities by the candidate beforehand.

Secretary/Controller  
J&K BOTE, Jammu/Srinagar

No. BOTE/ADM/2026/861-870  
DATED: 30-03-2026

DIPK-12281/25  
DATED: 31-03-2026

## Tulip Garden draws 1.78 lakh visitors in 15 days

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Mar 31: The Tulip Garden in Srinagar has recorded a footfall of 1,77,869 visitors in the first 15 days, with officials saying the final count is likely to be higher as online ticketing data has not been included.

Assistant Floriculture Officer In-charge Tulip Garden Srinagar, Imran Ahmad said that the current figures are based on available offline ticket records.

"The footfall in the first 15 days is 1,77,869. This does not include online ticketing data, which will be compiled after the garden closes," he said. Ahmad said the visitors include locals, domestic tourists and foreign tourists among them, though their separate count was not available this time.

Officials said the garden is witnessing a steady rise in visitors and expect a further surge in the coming days as the bloom reaches its peak. Situated at the foothills of the Zabarwan range overlooking Dal Lake, Asia's largest Tulip Garden, this year features around 70-75 varieties of tulips and remains a major highlight of Jammu and Kashmir's spring tourism season—(KNO)



**"The footfall in the first 15 days is 1,77,869. This does not include online ticketing data, which will be compiled after the garden closes,"**

## Rs 3.80 Cr subsidy to 4,288 beneficiaries under PM-SGMBY: CM Omar

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 31: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that Rs 3.80 crore has been disbursed as UT subsidy in favour of 4,288 consumers of Kashmir and Jammu Power Distribution Companies under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.

The Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by legislator Shakti Raj Parihar regarding the scheme.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the Power portfolio, said that Rs 1.80 crore has been disbursed in favour of the first 2,053 consumers of KPDC, in line with the Central Financial Assistance (CFA). Similarly, Rs 2 crore has been disbursed in favour of 2,235 beneficiaries of JPDCL under the scheme. He informed the House that under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, the subsidy component



is primarily borne by the Government of India through the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, with an additional

subsidy component provided by the UT. The Central Financial Assistance (CFA) is provided to residential consumers installing

rooftop solar systems at Rs 33,000 per kW for the first 2 kW of installed capacity and Rs 19,800 per kW for the next 1 kW, taking the total maximum subsidy to Rs 85,800 for systems up to 3 kW. In addition, the UT provides a subsidy of Rs 3,000 per kW—Rs 6,000 for 2 kW and up to Rs 9,000 for 3 kW (capped at 3 kW)—taking the total subsidy up to Rs 94,800 for a 3 kW system, he added. The Chief Minister further stated that delays, wherever applicable, in the release of the UT's share are primarily due to the verification of beneficiary installations, scrutiny of supporting documents, and integration of subsidy disbursement through the national portal.

He said that the J&K Administration is taking necessary steps to streamline the process and assured that the pending UT subsidy share will be released to eligible beneficiaries upon completion of verification formalities.

## NC MLAs decry security withdrawal from party HQ

WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Mar 31: MLAs of ruling National Conference on Tuesday complained about the withdrawal of security to their party headquarters, Nawai Subah.

During Zero Hour, National Conference MLA Justice (retd.) Hasnain Masoodi said security withdrawal of MLAs as well as of party headquarters seems to be a well-planned conspiracy.

"The security of our party headquarters has been withdrawn. This is a serious concern. The way our party workers were targeted, keeping in view the prevailing security scenario, the security should have been strengthened instead of withdrawn," he said urging the Speaker to pass appropriate directions in the matter.

Joining the chorus, National Conference MLA Nazir Gurezi termed withdrawal of security to party headquarters as unfortunate.

"Wherever you go, whether it is Punjab or Himachal Pradesh, security is provided to offices of political parties," he said, urging the Speaker to pass directions for restoring security to party headquarters as well as that of MLAs.

Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in

## MLAs can allocate up to Rs 50 Lakh from CDF to calamity victims: CM

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 31: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that funds under the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Scheme are being utilized across all Assembly constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir for works identified and recommended by respective MLAs, in accordance with guidelines issued by the Finance Department.

The Chief Minister was responding to a Calling Attention Motion moved by MLA Habba Kadal Shamim Firdous during the ongoing Budget Session

of the J&K Legislative Assembly.

He said that the Government has amended the CDF guidelines to expand the scope of assistance. As per the revised provisions, MLAs can now allocate up to 50 lakh from their CDF for providing housing assistance, including reconstruction and repair of houses for families affected by calamities, for the FY 2026-27. The Chief Minister further informed that the assistance to an individual family is capped at 1 lakh, and importantly, the benefit is not restricted to tribal or BPL families but is available to all affected families. Clarifying the scope of the term "calamity" in the amended guidelines, he stated that it includes all

events causing significant damage or harm, including fire incidents.

Referring to District Srinagar, the Chief Minister said that 24 cases were received from MLA Habba Kadal for providing assistance to fire victims under the CDF Scheme, involving an estimated cost of 12.80 lakh. Of these, five cases have already been cleared for additional assistance after completing all required formalities. He added that the remaining 19 cases are under examination and assessment in the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, and assured that all eligible cases recommended by the MLA will be processed in accordance with the prescribed norms.

## War of words between Lone, Dy CM

WARIS FAYAZ

JAMMU: A war of words broke out between Peoples Conference MLA Sajad Gani Lone and National Conference leaders in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday over the withdrawal of security to NC's party headquarters.

During Zero Hour, Lone questioned the discussion on the withdrawal of security to NC's party headquarters, saying legislators are not allowed to debate the Public Safety Act or police verification, yet are permitted to discuss security withdrawal.

"When we talk about PSA or police verification, you say this House doesn't have powers. Then this House also doesn't have powers to discuss security. Why are you allowing them to talk so much?" Lone asked.

The Speaker, however, clarified that he had not stopped anyone from raising issues but had only prevented legislators from using certain parliamentary devices due to rules.

Lone further alleged that thousands of people were killed in Kashmir due to denial of security by the National Conference-led government.

"I am entitled to the highest level of security. I don't have house guards," he said, adding that NC should write to the Home Ministry over the issue instead of projecting themselves as martyrs. Irked by Lone's remarks, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary asked Lone to vacate his official residential bungalow.

"You come here and lecture us. You should vacate the residential house," Choudhary retorted. Lone hit back, saying Choudhary was a blot on the chair of the Deputy Chief Minister.

Responding sharply, NC MLA Javid Hasan Baig said the issue was not about any single party but a collective concern for all legislators. He termed Lone's remarks as personal and accused him of downplaying the seriousness of the matter. Baig added that if such incidents could happen to one party, they could happen to anyone, and questioned whether Lone would take responsibility in case of any untoward incident.

Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in

## From Legislative Assembly

## 994 posts allocated for ReK regularisation: Govt

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 31: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday said that 994 vacant posts of Physical Education Teachers (PETs) have been kept reserved for the regularisation of Rehbar-e-Khel (ReK) candidates under the existing policy.

Replying to an unstarred question by MLA Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi, the government said that as per the policy issued under Government Order No. 141-Edu (YSS) of 2017, a total of 2,395 Rehbar-e-Khel candidates are to be regularised in a phased manner after completion of seven years of satisfactory and continuous service.

The government informed that these 994 vacant PET posts, along with other available posts, are required to accommodate the regularisation process of ReK candidates.

It added that the modalities for implementation of the regularisation process are currently under consideration.

Regarding recruitment, the government clarified that there is no proposal under consideration to de-freeze these posts or refer them to the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) for fresh recruitment, as the posts have been reserved in line with the Rehbar-e-Khel policy.

Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in

## '639 industrial units established in two years'



RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 31: The Jammu & Kashmir government on Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that 639 Industrial Units have been established

in the Union Territory during the last two financial years.

Replying to an unstarred question by MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia, the Industries & Commerce Department said that

234 units were set up in 2023-24 and 405 units in 2024-25, taking the total to 639 units.

Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in

## GI tags secured for 18 traditional handicrafts

RAJA SYED RATHER

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday said it has secured Geographical Indication (GI) registration for 18 traditional handicrafts of Jammu and Kashmir to ensure their authenticity and promote genuine Kashmiri products.

Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in

## Govt rules out job application fee waiver proposal

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 31: The Jammu & Kashmir government on Tuesday said there is no proposal under consideration to grant concession or exemption in job application fees charged by recruitment agencies in the Union Territory.

Continued on  
www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

## Collective Spirit Drives Nation's Prosperity

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unwavering dedication and relentless efforts serve as a powerful source of inspiration for every Indian. His tireless commitment to the nation's welfare demonstrates a resolve to build a strong, prosperous India, even amidst unprecedented global challenges. Under his leadership, India has not only weathered storms from international crises but has also emerged resilient and confident on the world stage. Modi's vision and determination continue to steer the country toward rapid

development, ensuring that India remains a beacon of stability, growth, and progress. The remarkable progress made by Jammu and Kashmir in recent years exemplifies the transformative impact of visionary leadership. The Union Territory has set new benchmarks in development, showcasing a profound sense of patriotism through participation in pivotal national events like Vande Mataram and Har Ghar Tiranga. These initiatives are more than symbolic gestures; they are reflections of a deep-rooted pride and commitment to

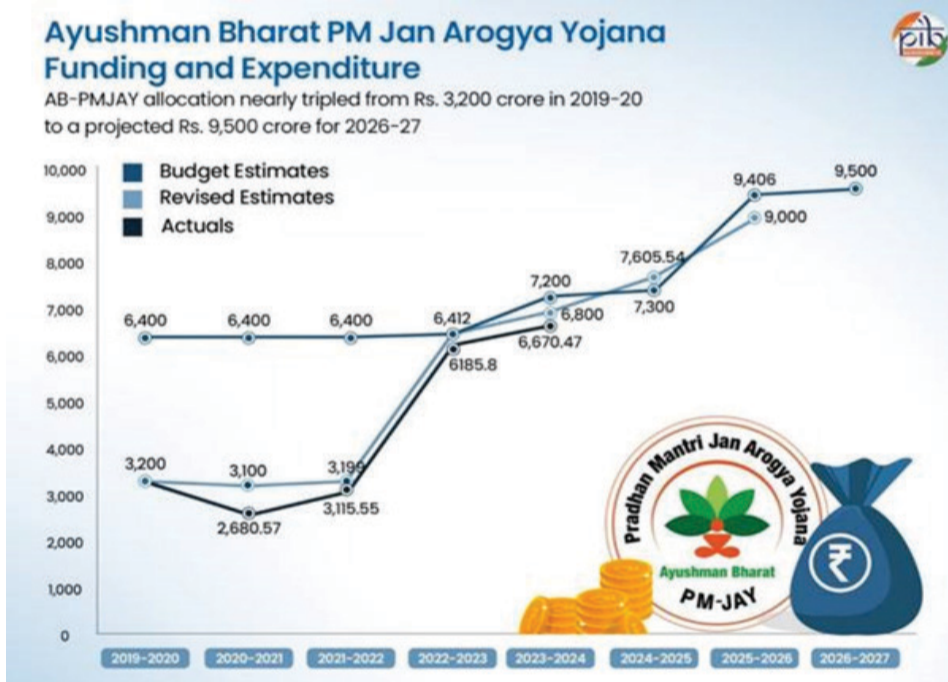
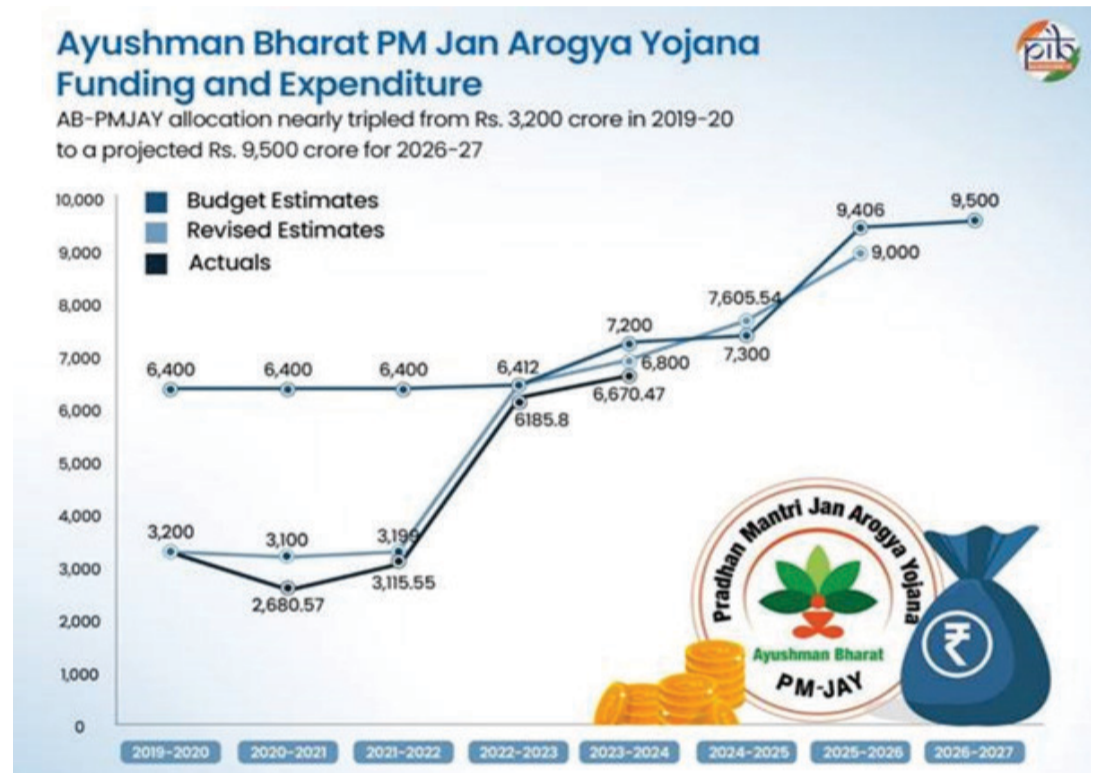
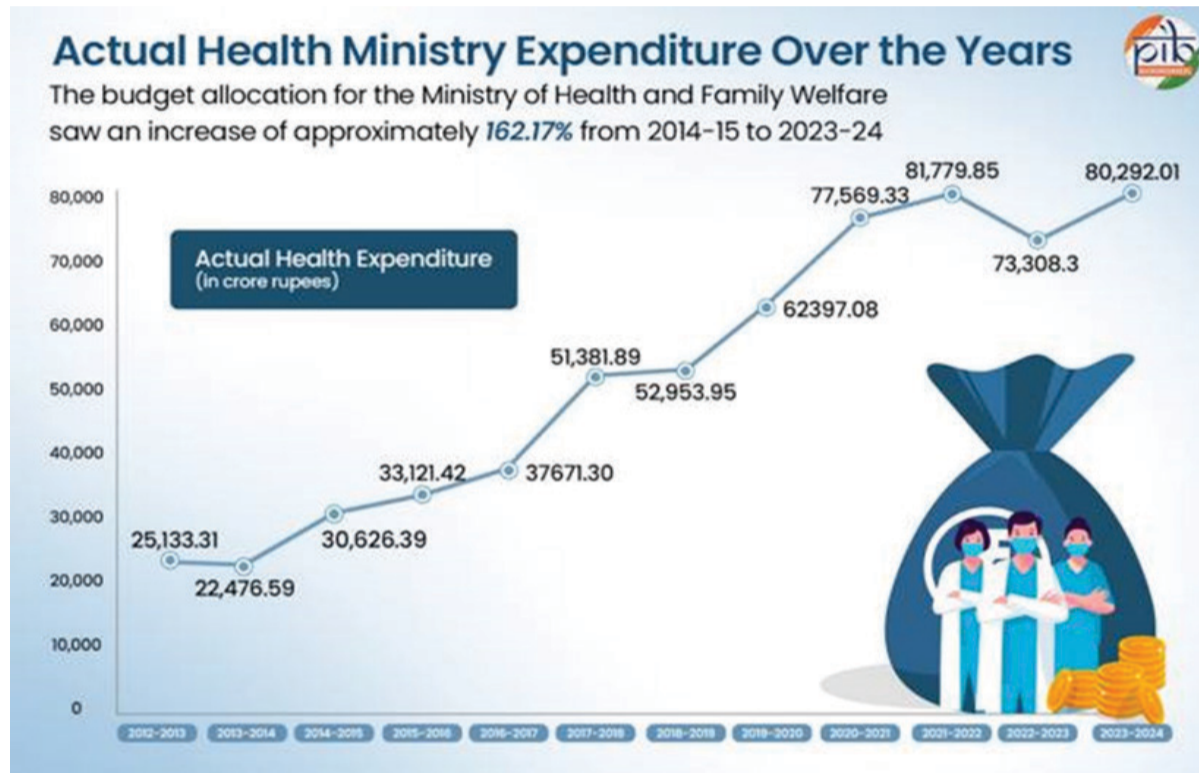
India's heritage and sovereignty. Such collective enthusiasm indicates a renewed sense of unity and purpose that is vital for the nation's progress. Vande Mataram, a hymn that embodies India's identity and strength, continues to inspire millions. It is not just a song but a profound expression of the nation's soul—honouring the sacrifices of martyrs and reaffirming our pledge to uphold India's glory. Celebrations around Vande Mataram serve as a reminder of our shared history and a call to every citizen to contribute toward the

nation's development. The spirit of patriotism fostered through these events fuels a collective desire to make India the greatest nation in the world. The enthusiasm and participation witnessed during the commemorative phases of the 150-year celebration of Vande Mataram highlight the potential of Jammu and Kashmir to forge a promising future. The region's dedication to embracing patriotic values and shedding past pain exemplifies a renewed hope and resilience. Such collective efforts reinforce the belief that true strength

lies in unity, patriotism, and a shared vision for India's future. Ultimately, the enduring message of Vande Mataram and related patriotic campaigns is clear: honouring our history, empowering our present, and aspiring for a brighter, unified future. It is a collective responsibility for all sections of society—government, civil society, youth, and citizens—to work together in nation-building. The spirit of patriotism ignited through these initiatives will continue to inspire India's journey toward peace, prosperity, and global leadership.

## ==== BUDGET 2026-27 SERIES ====

# Prioritising Healthcare For A Viksit Bharat 2047



### AYUSH National Infrastructure

Indicator	National Scale
Registered AYUSH practitioners	755,780
AYUSH hospitals	3,844
AYUSH Doctors	24,266
AYUSH Pharmacists	3,416
AYUSH Paramedics	2,275
AYUSH dispensaries	36,848
Undergraduate AYUSH colleges	886
Postgraduate AYUSH colleges	251
Annual intake capacity	59,643 UG seats and 7,450 PG seats
AYUSH services co-located in public health facilities	2,375 PHCs, 713 CHCs and 306 District Hospitals

#### Key Takeaways

- The Union Budget 2026-27 has increased allocation for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by 10%, to Rs. 1,06,530.42 crore from the revised estimates of 2025-26.
- 100% customs duty exemption on 17 new cancer drugs
- Union Budget 2026-27 targets training 100,000 allied health professionals and 1.5 lakh caregivers over the next five years
- Budget proposed establishing three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda to meet growing global demand and upgrade the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar.

#### Press Information Bureau

India's healthcare landscape is undergoing a transformative phase. The Union Budget 2026-27, driven by the insights of the Economic Survey 2025-26, has established a comprehensive roadmap for universal health coverage through infrastructure development, preventive care, and digital integration, focusing on youth, underprivileged, and elderly populations. The budget prioritises non-communicable diseases (NCDs) while strengthening traditional medicine, mental health services, and the biopharma sector.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been allocated Rs. 1,06,530.42 crore—a 10% increase from FY 2025-26 and 194% rise over 12 years. The Department of Health Research has been allocated Rs. 4,821.21 crore. This rising government expenditure demonstrates strong commitment toward universal healthcare and medical research innovation.

#### Budget 2026-27 Healthcare-Related Announcements

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's budgetary allocation increased from last year's revised estimates, following the decade-old trend of rising health funding.

Many health initiatives were allocated more funds this year (in crore rupees).

Many health initiatives received increased funding in the current year, with the total budget estimates for 2026-27 surpassing the revised estimates of 2025-26. For instance, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya

Yojana (PM-JAY) was allocated 9,500 crore rupees in 2026-27, which is an increase of 500 crore rupees or 5.56% compared to last year's revised estimates of 9,000 crore rupees. Similarly, the National Health Mission (NHM) saw a rise of approximately 2,290 crore rupees, reaching a total of 39,390 crore rupees, marking a 6.17% increase from the previous year's revised estimate of 37,100.

The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) was allocated 11,307 crore rupees, reflecting a 3.73% increase from the revised estimate of 10,900 crore rupees. The National AIDS and STD Control Programme received a significant boost of 815.50 crore rupees, which is a 30.64% increase, bringing its total to 3,477 crore rupees. Blood Transfusion Services were allocated 275 crore rupees, an increase of 75 crore rupees or 37.50%.

The Human Resources for Health & Medical Education program received 1,725 crore rupees, up by 95 crore rupees (5.83%), and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission was allocated 350 crore rupees, showing a 7.94% increase. The PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) saw a substantial rise of 1,925 crore rupees, reaching 4,770 crore rupees, which is a 67.66% increase from the previous estimate of 2,845 crore rupees.

In the non-scheme components, the budget for AIIMS, New Delhi increased by 262.22 crore rupees to 5,500.92 crore rupees, a 5.01% rise. The Central Government Health Scheme and pensioners' benefits were allocated 8,697.86 crore rupees, an increase of 590.90 crore rupees or 7.29%. Central

Hospitals received 4,599.66 crore rupees, up by 392.82 crore rupees (9.34%), and PGIMER, Chandigarh was allocated 2,504.65 crore rupees, an increase of 86.79 crore rupees or 3.59%. Lastly, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was allocated 4,000 crore rupees, which is 850 crore rupees more than the previous estimate, representing a 26.98% increase.

Funding for the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), launched in 2018, has been steadily rising. As the world's largest public healthcare scheme, it provides health insurance of up to Rs. 5 lakhs annually per eligible household, making quality healthcare affordable for over 12 crore vulnerable families. Funding for other schemes has also increased over the decade, responding to India's evolving health landscape and demand for stronger healthcare infrastructure.

#### Budget 2026-27: New Initiatives

New initiatives and schemes announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 focus on India's healthcare challenges while aiming to train a greater number of healthcare professionals.

#### Rise of Non-Communicable Diseases

The recently released Economic Survey 2025-26 highlights a critical shift in India's health landscape. While the nation has achieved significant progress in tackling maternal and child health and increasing life expectancy from 49.7 years in 1973 to 70.3 years in 2023, it now faces a rising health challenge: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity and cancers. NCDs accounted for 57% of deaths in the country in 2021-23.

The Government of India runs the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases to systematically identify high-risk individuals and link them to appropriate care and treatment.

Over the years, the funds approved for State Programme Implementation Plans have increased:

AYUSH and Traditional Medicine: From Civilisational Knowledge to a Global Health System

#### Global Recognition and Strategic Context

India's traditional knowledge systems have evolved into globally recognised health frameworks. Post-COVID, demand for preventive care has driven wider acceptance of the already popular Ayurveda and AYUSH systems. The Union Budget 2026-27 positions AYUSH as a contemporary health, wellness, and economic opportunity, benefiting farmers cultivating medicinal plants and youth in processing, thereby advancing public health, rural incomes, and India's global soft power.

#### Budget 2026-27: Building the Future of AYUSH and Traditional Medicine

The Union Budget 2026-27 marks a decisive transition for AYUSH from expansion to consolidation, quality enhancement, and global leadership, transforming it from practice-based systems into scientifically validated global health disciplines. The strategic initiatives aim to strengthen education, clinical training, and research capacity for both domestic healthcare delivery and international engagement, while raising regulatory standards and certification ecosystems to position Indian AYUSH products

in global markets that demand scientifically validated solutions. By deciding to upgrade the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre at Jamnagar, India positions itself as a global hub for evidence-based research, training, and international awareness, anchoring traditional systems within global research and knowledge frameworks. The integration of AYUSH Centres into Regional Medical Hubs embeds traditional medicine into India's medical value tourism offerings alongside modern diagnostics, treatment, and rehabilitation services. This will ultimately lead to AYUSH evolving to meet rising global demands through scientific validation, quality assurance, and seamless integration with modern healthcare delivery systems.

#### Conclusion

The Union Budget 2026-27 has accorded significant priority to the health sector, with a substantial increase in allocations for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reflecting the Government's continued commitment to strengthening India's healthcare system and ensuring universal access to quality medical services. Key commitments include expanded allied health workforce, addressing immediate clinical needs and long-term economic goals. Initiatives span global AYUSH integration, NIMHANS-2 establishment in North India, and investments in infrastructure, nutrition, and emergency care. All this ensures India's demographic dividend is supported by a healthy, skilled, and resilient population, thereby positioning healthcare as a fundamental pillar for Viksit Bharat by 2047.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

## BUDGET SESSION 2026

### No structural deficiency, safety concern on Sopore Bye-pass Bridge: Deputy CM

'Present repair work being carried out on a priority basis'

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 31: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary Tuesday informed the House that Sopore Bypass Bridge was originally constructed with a rigid Cement Concrete (CC) deck surface to bear heavy structural loads and provide a stable base for traffic movement over a long period of time.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to the Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator Irshad Rasool Kar in the Legislative Assembly Tuesday.

He informed that to enhance riding comfort for road users and to provide a smoother driving experience, an additional bituminous (blacktop) layer was laid over the concrete deck to improve surface smoothness and reduce vibrations during travel.

He also said that minor localized distress (damage) can develop in the top bituminous layer which appears in the



form of small patches, cracks, unevenness or surface peeling at isolated locations. He added that due to heavy and continuous traffic load associated with Sopore Fruit Mandi, bridge experiences a high volume of vehicular movement accelerating wear and tear of the bituminous overlay.

The Deputy Chief Minister also said that there is no structural deficiency or safety concern in the bridge itself and

the main concrete structure remains fully intact, stable, and safe for vehicular movement.

He also added that prompt action was taken by the concerned authorities and Project BEACON has already initiated necessary repair measures like careful removal of the damaged bituminous portions, treatment of the affected areas to ensure proper bonding restoration using more durable, concrete-based or suitable materials to prevent recurrence.

The Deputy CM also said that at present repair work is being carried out on a priority basis and the situation is being closely monitored by the executing agency. He added that all necessary resources have been mobilized and the remaining repair work will be completed expeditiously. He highlighted that the safety of the bridge remains un-compromised, and necessary corrective measures are already underway to restore full riding quality for the public at the earliest.

### Introduction of Artificial Intelligence as a subject under active consideration: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo Tuesday informed the House that the government is endeavouring hard to boost the educational ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir, with special focus on establishing all kind of facilities in the government schools.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated this while replying to a question of Legislator, Khursheed Ahmad Sheikh in the Legislative Assembly regarding introduction of new subjects.

She informed that components relating to general studies, computer education, digital literacy and vocational skill-based education have been introduced at different levels of schooling in a phased manner depending upon the levels of institution, availability of infrastructure, trained manpower and other requisite facilities.

She added that Computer Science, Information Practices and IT as separate subjects have already been introduced in the curriculum at Higher Secondary School Level (XI to XII). Besides, vocational/skill based education with 15 different trades have also been implemented in High and



Higher Secondary in alignment with the recommendations of the National Education Policy

She further said that the introduction of Artificial Intelligence as a subject/discipline is also under active consideration in the department in alignment with NEP 2020.

The integration of 21st century skills, as articulated in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023, and

rationalization, revised pedagogical approaches, competency-based assessments and integration of skill-oriented modules at the Secondary and Senior Secondary levels.

The Minister also informed that the existing curriculum is aligned with the National Education Policy-2020, particularly in respect of digital literacy, multidisciplinary learning and vocational education. She informed that the National Education Policy 2020 advocates an integrated and holistic approach to curriculum design, and accordingly, domains like Digital Literacy and Skill Education are embedded within the curriculum from the Foundational Stage onwards.

She also gave out that the teachers are being oriented and trained to effectively integrate these competencies into classroom practices, thereby ensuring the acquisition of relevant skills and learning outcomes in a holistic manner.

The Minister further revealed that at the Secondary and Senior Secondary levels, Digital Literacy and Skill Education are also being offered as dedicated elective subjects within the curriculum, in addition to their cross-curricular integration.

### 4 ambulances available at SDH Bijbehara: Health Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 31: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Tuesday informed that the Critical Care Ambulances (CCA) procured under the 108-Emergency Services with World Bank assistance were distributed among various health institutions strictly on the basis of assessed requirement and institutional priority.

The Health Minister, as per an official statement, stated this while replying to a calling attention motion moved

by Legislator Dr. Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri in House Tuesday.

She informed that the allocation of ambulances was undertaken after due consideration of factors like patient load, service demand, geographical coverage and the existing emergency response infrastructure across the health institutions.

The Minister also said that at present, four ambulances are available with SDH Bijbehara, including one under the 108 service and there is no immediate requirement for an additional ambulance for the hospital.

### 1190 AWCs functional in Srinagar district, 152 in Central Shaletang constituency: Health Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 31: Minister for Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, Tuesday said that 1190 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) are functional in Srinagar district with 152 AWCs functioning in Central Shaletang Constituency.

The Minister, as per an official statement, informed this in reply to a question raised by Legislator Tariq Hameed Karra regarding Social Welfare schemes in the Legislative Assembly.

She said that at present there is no proposal under consideration of the government regarding opening/establishment of new Anganwadi Centres in Central Shaletang Constituency as the existing centres are catering to the needs of the target beneficiaries of the said

Constituency. The Minister further said that the that any proposal regarding opening of new AWCs that fulfil the criteria would be examined for submission to the Government of India.

She also informed that the monthly honorarium to Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs) is in consonance with the honorarium provided to AWWs and AWHs at the National level on the pattern of 90:10. She added that the Government of J&K is already giving additional state share to AWWs and AWHs and the matter would be taken up with Central Government to examine enhancement of honorarium subject to availability of resources.

Giving details about the beneficiaries covered under

social welfare schemes in Central Shaletang constituency, the Social Welfare Minister informed that 6756 beneficiaries are covered under Old Age Pension, Widow Pension and various other Centrally and UT sponsored welfare schemes in the constituency.

She apprised that the old age pension under the Integrated Social Security Scheme (ISSS) and National Social Assistance Programme has recently been enhanced along with other components and the persons aged below 60 years are paid Rs.1250/- per month, between 60-79 years Rs 1500/- per month and 80 years and above @ Rs 2000/- per month.

Legislators, Balwant Singh Mankotia and Qaysir Jamsheed Lone raised supplementary questions.

### Metrolite, Light Metro projects for Jammu, Srinagar under Govt consideration: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

The Government of India is currently reviewing proposals for Metrolite and Light Metro projects in Jammu and Srinagar, aiming to enhance the cities' transportation infrastructure.

This was stated by Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo in the Legislative Assembly Tuesday while replying to a question of Legislator Mohan Lal, regarding the matter, on behalf of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The Minister, as per an official statement, informed that in Jammu city, comprehensive ground surveys, traffic studies, feasibility analysis and DPR preparation has been completed through M/s RITES Limited. She added that the DPR included alignment planning, ridership projections (2.84 lakh daily ridership by 2035), cost estimates, land requirements (29.58 hectare permanent and

1.50 hectare temporary), environmental and seismic design considerations besides financial structuring.

It was also apprised that the Economic Internal Rate of Return (EIRR) has been assessed at 18.92%. The current proposal is confined to the Jammu urban corridor from Bantalab to Bari Brahmana covering 23 km with 22 stations, she said.

It was told that at present no proposal is under consideration for extending the Metrolite corridor to Akhnour town and any future expansion would be subject to separate feasibility assessment and approval of the Government of India.

Regarding Srinagar city, the Minister said that detailed topographical surveys, traffic and ridership assessments, engineering feasibility studies, financial and economic analyses and alignment planning have been undertaken through M/s RITES Ltd.

### Govt working to ensure reliable water supply in Sonawari

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 31: Government Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that it is actively working to complete the Retrofitting of Water Supply Scheme (WSS) SK Bala under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Dudwan area of Sonawari Constituency.

This was informed by Minister for Agriculture Javid Ahmad Dar in the House while replying to Calling Attention Motion moved by MLA Hilal Akbar Lone regarding water supply in Dudwan Saderkote Bala in Sonawari Constituency. He was replying on behalf of Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said that strenuous efforts are underway to

complete the remaining work of the scheme in order to ensure reliable piped water supply to Sonawari.

Elaborating, the minister said that the scheme, based on a borewell source, is presently under execution, with electro-mechanical works and laying/fitting of rising mains to the Service Reservoir at Dudwan in progress.

The Minister informed that as an interim measure to cater to the demands, the department is providing water through deploying tanker service on a scheduled roster.

It further informed that, regrettably, on 26th March 2026 while on a routine duty, an unfortunate incident occurred wherein a minor girl got killed. An FIR has been registered, and a formal investigation is underway, he said.

### JJM reducing dependence on tanker service across rural areas: Govt

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 31: Minister for Agriculture Javid Ahmad Dar Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that the completion and commissioning of schemes under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), will significantly reduce the dependence on tanker services in rural areas.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a Calling Attention Motion



raised by MLA Baldev Raj Sharma regarding water supply shortage in Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Constituency. He was replying on behalf of Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana.

Javid Dar informed that the government is strictly adhering to the established norms and regulations while ensuring uninterrupted water supply to the public in the constituency and other areas. He added that to meet any urgent water

requirement during occasional disruptions, peak summer demand or peak pilgrimage period, private tankers shall be hired as and when required.

The Minister reiterated that the ongoing expansion of water supply infrastructure under JJM is aimed at ensuring sustainable and reliable drinking water access, thereby minimising reliance on temporary arrangements and strengthening overall service delivery across Jammu and Kashmir.

### Veteran DIPR Artist Hilal Ahmad Mattoo retires

Warm farewell accorded at Joint Directorate Kashmir

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, MARCH 31: Joint Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Kashmir on Tuesday bid a heartfelt farewell to its veteran artist and senior official, Hilal Ahmad Mattoo, on his superannuation.

On the occasion, a grand farewell function was organized at Joint Directorate of Information, Kashmir, where officers and officials gathered in large numbers to bid him a warm send-off.

Joint Director Information Kashmir, Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari, as per an official statement, congratulated Mattoo on his retirement and praised his distinguished service. Deputy Director Kashmir, Mohammad Rafiq Zullah appreciated the retiring official for his dedicated service even in odd times. Cultural Officer, Burhan Hussain



also extended his best wishes to Mattoo for a successful and fulfilling post-retirement life.

Speaking on the occasion, AECO, Syed Shakeel Shan lauded Mattoo for his unwavering dedication and commitment to duty. He said that retiring official had always performed his responsibilities with sincerity and professionalism, rising to the occasion whenever his services were required under all circumstances.

In his farewell address, Hilal

Ahmad Mattoo fondly recalled his long and fulfilling career, describing it as a "golden period" marked by learning, service, and memorable experiences.

Colleagues and officers present at the function appreciated his valuable contributions to the department, particularly in promoting cultural activities and performing arts across the region. They offered prayers for his good health, happiness, and prosperity in the years ahead.

### DC Budgam reviews progress of 125-bedded district hospital, 100-bedded CCU

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, MARCH 31: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of the under-construction 125-bedded state-of-the-art District Hospital and the 100-bedded Critical Care Unit (CCU) at Reshipora, Budgam.

At the outset, the DC, as per an official statement, took a detailed appraisal of the physical and financial progress achieved so far on both major healthcare projects.

Emphasizing the critical importance of timely completion, he directed all executing agencies and concerned departments to further accelerate the pace of work while strictly adhering to quality standards.

The DC underscored that these

flagship projects are of immense public significance and are poised to transform the healthcare delivery system in the district. He noted that upon completion, these facilities will substantially enhance the district's capacity to provide specialized and critical care services locally.

While reviewing the progress, the DC expressed satisfaction over the pace of work on the ground and appreciated the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders. He reiterated the administration's commitment to ensuring that both projects are completed well within the stipulated timelines.

The DC stated that the upcoming District Hospital, equipped with modern infrastructure and advanced medical facilities, will significantly reduce the referral burden on tertiary care hospitals

and ensure quality healthcare services within the district.

The 100-bedded CCU, he added, will play a pivotal role in managing emergency and critical cases, thereby improving patient outcomes. The DC emphasized that the District Administration, in close coordination with the Health and R&B Departments, is closely monitoring the progress of works on a regular basis.

During the meeting, the DC also directed the concerned departments to initiate and expedite the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for essential allied infrastructure, including transmission lines, oxygen plant, electrical works, PHE pipelines, Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), and other allied works to ensure seamless functionality of both healthcare facilities upon completion.

"Our focus remains on ensuring timely and quality completion of these vital healthcare projects. Every aspect is being closely monitored so that these facilities are dedicated to the public ahead of schedule, significantly strengthening healthcare delivery in Budgam," the DC said.

The DC also directed officers to maintain strict adherence to timelines, ensure optimal utilization of resources, and enforce accountability at all levels. He stressed the need for sustained on-ground supervision to achieve smooth and accelerated progress.

The meeting was attended by SE R&B, Circle Budgam, Iram Lone, CPO Budgam, CMO Budgam, Medical Superintendent District Hospital Budgam, Executive Engineers, AEs, and representatives of executing agencies.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

## India's transformation

innovation and use cultural heritage as a potent tool to transform society.

"In this interconnected era, strengthen brotherhood's bond. Champion compassion over conflict worldwide," he told the youth.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that art and culture wield profound insight, purpose, and craft, which are essential for nation-building. For India, art, spirituality, philosophy, and ethics are bridges linking generations, he said.

"This is modern history's toughest phase, and we are fortunate that Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is leading the country, establishing new benchmarks in progress and welfare," he added.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that India's transformation over the past 12 years has been extraordinary. He emphasised that society must accelerate this transformation collectively. In the coming decades, we must harness new energy and resolve to build technologies and systems reshaping domestic and global industries, he added.

"On international platforms, India has reclaimed ancient glory and confidence. Indian engineers, scientists, industrialists, and innovators now steer global discourse; their technologies and talents earn worldwide acclaim. I see this as a renaissance, reviving India's glorious history," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Jammu Kashmir Cultural Festival featured various activities, including cultural exhibition, traditional folk performances, Kisan Mela and free medical camp.

On the occasion, distinguished individuals were also felicitated for their outstanding contributions in their respective fields.

Members of Legislative Assembly, Sham Lal Sharma and Devyani Rana; Mahant Rohit Shastri, President, Shri Kailakh Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust; Mukul Kanitkar, prominent citizens and people in large numbers attended the cultural festival.

Suresh Kumar Sharma, Member, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu and senior officials were also present.

## India stands resolute

focused on introspection, individual transformation, and his teachings of discipline, faith, and awareness can elevate society. "By internalising Ahimsa, restraint, austerity, Anekantavada, non-possession, and truth, we can contribute meaningfully to nation-building. Our impact depends on the character we cultivate," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the young generation to infuse non-violence into its mindset and reform attitudes toward nature, long exploited as mere utility. "True Ahimsa transcends ethics, becoming the sharpest environmental strategy," he said.

Sinha emphasised that Lord Mahavira's legacy is a refined guidebook for navigating complexity. "Lord Mahavira declared Ahimsa, restraint, and austerity the supreme auspiciousness. One whose mind dwells therein earns even god's salutations. This is his bequest and heritage for every generation," he said. "Through Anekantavada, Lord Mahavira taught humility. He affirmed truth's multifaceted nature; no single viewpoint captures it fully. Today, amid echo chambers, people mistake opinions for absolute truth, eroding balance. On Mahavira Jayanti, embrace intellectual humility; questioning one's opinion exemplifies supreme wisdom."

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also felicitated the achievers from diverse fields. Suneel Jain, President, SS Jain Sabha; Devki Nandan, Jain, Vice President, Pavinder Vijay Jain, General Secretary and other members of SS Jain Sabha, Jammu, prominent citizens and people from different walks joined the celebrations.

Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Members of Legislative Assembly, Yudhvir Sethi and Arvind Gupta; Anand Jain, ADGP Armed; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu and other senior officers were also present.

## Govt colleges

presently placed under the charge of Government Degree College, Anantnag and S.P College, Srinagar, respectively, for administrative oversight."

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the concerned in-charge minister for Higher Education informed the house that less than 30 students were enrolled in each of the 13 colleges of Jammu and Kashmir.

The government figures also said that at least five colleges of Jammu and Kashmir were functioning with an enrolment of less than twenty students in 2025 and eight colleges were functioning with less than 30 students respectively.

The figures further reveal that in 14 colleges in Jammu and Kashmir, fewer than 50 students were enrolled in each college.

Furthermore, 24 government colleges were having less than 100 students enrolled in each college.

The government figures also reveal that in 13 colleges of Jammu and Kashmir, only 100-300 students were enrolled in each college.

The houses was informed that in Government College of Education, M A Road Srinagar only 14 students were enrolled in the year 2025 followed by 11 students in JKIMS, 16 students in Govt Degree College Chatroo Kishtwar, 10 in GDC Langate, 18 in GDC Dangiwachhi Baramulla, 28 students in GDC Tulail Bandipora.

The government also informed that the GDC Verinag was functioning with a student enrolment of 29 in the year 2025 followed

by 27 student enrolment in Govt Degree College Marwah Kishtwar, 27 students in Govt Degree College Mandi Poonch, 22 students in Govt Degree College Dharmari Reasi, 26 in Govt Degree College, Dudu Bastargarh Udhampur, 26 in Govt Degree College Kralpora Kupwara and 27 students were enrolled in GDC Vilgam Kupwara.

The concerned minister said this while replying to the query as to how many GDC's were presently functional in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir indicating also the overall student enrolment in each college for the last two academic years.

"Currently, 143 Degree Colleges, Government College of Engineering and Technology (GCETs) across the UT of Jammu and Kashmir are having active enrolment," the government informed the house.

It also said that there has been a slight decline in the enrolment of GDC Bijbehara during the previous two years. "Colleges across the region have been witnessing some decline in enrolment over the past few years owing to a variety of factors affecting admission patterns."

"However, during the last academic year, several initiatives have been undertaken by the Department to strengthen the admission process and improve student outreach. These include, inter-alia, admissions through a centralized admission portal and the rationalization or rejig of subject offerings in colleges to better align with student demand," the government said.

The house was further informed that additionally, the implementation of the fourth year under the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) has also generated increased student interest and participation in Government Degree Colleges across the Union Territory.

"As a result of these measures, the overall enrolment in colleges has shown improvement during the academic session 2025-26, with colleges in Anantnag district registering an increase of about 11.8 percent in enrolment," the government said. (KNO)

## Govt committed

in a hurried manner, which could result in the matter reaching the courts and the process being halted," he explained.

He further said, "We have seen several selection lists being framed and then challenged in the courts. In many cases, it took a long time to resolve the matter, and applicants became overage and could not be recruited. We want to maintain a balance in this matter."

While raising concerns over unemployment, the PDP legislator called for a time-bound recruitment process along with a transparent recruitment policy. He also expressed concern over the leaking of examination papers. (KNO)

## Surprising move:

the attack and raising concerns over the safety of political leaders.

He said the timing of the withdrawal has raised questions, especially when the threat perception continues to remain a matter of public discussion. "It is quite surprising that security was withdrawn under such circumstances," he said.

The Chief Minister added that there is a need for clarity from the concerned authorities regarding the intent behind the decision. (KNO)

## High-risk glacial

compared to other lakes," he said.

The study also carried out a preliminary geospatial assessment to evaluate downstream exposure. It identified habitations and critical infrastructure located along potential flood paths from these lakes. According to the findings, the five high-susceptibility lakes together pose potential risk to around 2,704 buildings, nearly 15 major bridges, stretches of road networks, and one hydropower project situated downstream.

Describing the study as a "baseline assessment," the Minister said it provides an initial framework for prioritizing vulnerable areas for more detailed scientific investigations. He emphasized that accurate risk assessment of GLOFs—such as predicting flood magnitude, velocity, and warning time—requires precise data on lake volumes, which can only be obtained through field-based bathymetric surveys.

In this regard, he informed that researchers at the University of Kashmir have already initiated steps to bridge this gap. The department has procured a high-precision RTK-enabled robotic echo-sounding boat with financial assistance from the Ministry of Earth Sciences. This advanced equipment will be used to conduct detailed bathymetric surveys of vulnerable glacial lakes in the western Himalaya starting in 2026.

"These efforts will generate critical scientific data for lake-volume estimation, hydrodynamic modelling, and more reliable downstream risk assessments," the Minister said, adding that such data will significantly enhance disaster preparedness and evidence-based planning in the region.

Outlining the future course of action, the Minister said the government plans to ensure continuous monitoring of high-risk lakes through satellite-based remote sensing and targeted field studies. He also highlighted the need for installing early-warning systems, developing eco-zonation plans for downstream areas, and integrating GLOF risk scenarios into district-level disaster management frameworks.

He further noted that researchers are already working on developing specialized early-warning systems tailored for mountainous environments. These systems aim to integrate satellite monitoring, field observations, sensor-based hydro-meteorological

data, and real-time communication networks to ensure timely detection and dissemination of hazard alerts.

The Minister reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening scientific research and institutional coordination to mitigate potential GLOF risks and safeguard vulnerable communities across the Kashmir Valley. (KNO)

## Rs 18,382 cr liabilities

Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the Finance portfolio, stated that financial liabilities of the Government in the form of bills presented at Treasuries are being cleared on a regular basis. He added that payments relating to contractors and retired employees are also processed at regular intervals.

He further informed that during the financial year (2025-26), the Government has cleared 2,864.14 crore in gratuity, 1,123.22 crore in commutation, ₹773.47 crore in leave salary and ₹7,800.58 crore in contractor bills up to March 27, 2026, while GPF claims amounting to 5,821.43 crore have been settled up to December 31, 2025.

Omar also clarified that allocations are made on the basis of Heads of Expenditure rather than on a divisional basis, and accordingly, payments in the Treasuries are accounted for head-wise. Legislator RS Pathania also raised a supplementary to the question.

## '3442 raids, 2443

Control Rooms are functional, while District Level Committees headed by Deputy Commissioners are monitoring stock positions at outlets and depots on a daily basis.

He added that real-time monitoring of petroleum products, including LPG, MS, HSD and CNG, is being carried out from outlet to bulk level in coordination with Oil Marketing Companies to ensure uninterrupted supply.

To counter misinformation he said, the government conducted 36 media interactions, briefings and social media engagements between March 15 and 24, along with on-ground outreach.

Sharma said regular review meetings, surprise inspections and strict enforcement measures are in place, warning of stringent action including fines, penalties and FIRs against hoarders and black marketers. (KNO)

## J&K has sufficient

strict action against those found violating norms, imposing fines and penalties for any irregularities found.

The Minister said that the department is conducting detailed inspections and raids besides undertaking punitive action including fine, penalties against the hoarders and black marketers, FIRs have also been lodged. He said that since 17 March 2026 a total number of 3442 inspections/raids have been conducted and several FIRs have been launched and 252 goods/articles have been seized/impounded with 2443 grievances/complaints redressed.

With regard to ensuring uninterrupted supply of Motor Spirit (MS) and High Speed diesel (HSD), the Minister informed that daily monitoring of Petroleum Products including LPG from stockiest/outlet level to bulk level of OMC's (State level) is being monitored.

The Minister said that steps taken for ensuring uninterrupted supply of MS/HSD/CNG Movement of LPG and Petroleum products in coordination with SLC/OMC (State level) is being facilitated with review of stock at stockiest/outlet level monitored by respective District Level Committee headed by Deputy Commissioners/District Magistrates. He said that other field functionaries drawn from different Departments for enforcement including punitive action against hoarders, black marketers, conducting of surprise visits stands encouraged.

He stated that there's no panic buying and no reports of rumours, with all channels being monitored for such activity. He added that from March 15 to 24, 36 media interactions, briefings, and social media engagements have been conducted, along with on-ground community interactions.

The Minister said that regular review meetings are also being held to monitor the availability and the measures being taken to ensure the same at different levels.

## Legislators raise

MLA Dr. Shafi Ahmad Wani raised concerns regarding acute manpower shortages in Budgam district, particularly the absence of key positions including Deputy Chief Education Officers (Dy CEOs), Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs), headmasters and principals in higher secondary schools.

MLA Chulam Mohi-ud-din Mir urged the government to resume construction work on the long-pending Government Degree College Rajpora, which has remained stalled for several years.

MLA Javaid Riyaz Bedar demanded posting of an Executive Officer for the Municipal Committee Pattan and the filling up of vacant posts such as ZEOs and Block Development Officers (BDOs) in his constituency.

MLA Tariq Hamid Karra flagged the issue of inflated electricity bills allegedly caused by load enhancements without consumers' consent, seeking intervention from the concerned authorities.

Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal emphasized the need for timely admissions of NEET-PG candidates to ensure that aspirants from the region are not disadvantaged at the national level.

MLA Prof. Gharu Ram Bhagat sought early repayment of long-pending dues to the depositors in the J&K SCARD Bank.

MLA Waheed ur Rehman Para requested for posting of a radiologist at District

Hospital Pulwama to strengthen the diagnostic services.

MLA Javaid Ahmad Mirchal called for filling up of vacant posts in the Health and Irrigation departments in his constituency, urging prompt intervention by the government.

MLA Choudhary Mohammed Akram pressed for the early release of the provisional list of field functionaries in the Agriculture Production Department. He also sought streamlining of the National Pension System (NPS) across J&K in light of recent amendments.

MLA Muzaffer Iqbal Khan demanded rehabilitation of families affected by road slippages in his constituency. He advocated for extending hostel facilities in Pahari Hostels to postgraduate students as well.

MLA Surinder Kumar raised concerns over disparities between rural and urban areas in accessing LPG services under existing norms.

MLA Zaffar Ali Khatana sought filling up of vacant posts including Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Kokernag and Executive Officer, Municipal Committee Kokernag and also supported the extension of the Power Amnesty Scheme.

MLA Arjun Singh Raju urged the government to improve road conditions in his constituency to facilitate smooth operation of SRTC buses.

MLA Javaid Iqbal demanded a detailed inquiry into the mysterious deaths reported in Budhal, Rajouri last year and also sought provision of additional buses to improve public transport in his area.

MLA Sheikh Ahsan Ahmad Pardesi requested the government to formulate a plan for optimal utilization of the vacant GB Pant Hospital premises, mentioning the lack of adequate healthcare facilities in the surrounding areas after relocation of the pediatric hospital.

MLA Satish Sharma called for an in-depth inquiry into the damage to recently constructed volleyball and badminton courts due to rains and demanded deployment of a fire tender in his constituency to meet emergency needs.

The issues raised during Zero Hour reflect a wide spectrum of public concerns, with legislators urging timely and effective intervention by the government to address these challenges and ensure improved service delivery across Jammu and Kashmir.

## Govt to prioritise

to a question raised by MLA Pulwama Waheed ur Rehman Para during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

Omar stated that under the direct recruitment quota, 24,507 non-gazetted and 3,808 gazetted posts are vacant, while under the promotion quota, 24,451 non-gazetted and 6,409 gazetted posts remain unfilled across these departments.

The Chief Minister further informed that, at the district level, a total of 16,812 non-gazetted and 2,798 gazetted posts are vacant across all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

He added that during the previous year (2025), 959 gazetted vacancies were referred to the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission, while 6,340 non-gazetted posts were referred to the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board for recruitment.

## Snowfall, rain

generally cloudy conditions with light to moderate rain or snowfall at many places are expected, accompanied by thunder and gusty winds," an official said.

The advisory further said partly cloudy conditions are likely between April 5 and 7, while fresh spells of light to moderate rain and snow in higher reaches are expected from April 8 to 10.

Authorities have also warned of thunderstorms and gusty winds reaching speeds of 30-40 kmph at isolated places, particularly during late afternoon hours on March 31, April 3 and 4.

Meanwhile, the Traffic Police Headquarters issued an advisory stating that the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) remained blocked for several hours due to landslides and shooting stones between Ramban and Banihal.

Although the road was later partially restored, commuters have been advised to avoid travel during night hours due to the risk of shooting stones. Passenger Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs) are being allowed from both sides under regulated conditions, subject to weather and road status.

The Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri (SSG) Road remains closed for vehicular movement towards Kargil due to fresh snowfall, with only stranded vehicles being allowed after clearance by road maintenance agencies.

Similarly, the Mughal Road connecting Shopian and Poonch has been closed due to snow accumulation.

Meanwhile, the Bandipora-Gurez road via Razdan Pass has also been closed following fresh snowfall, officials said. Traffic on the nearly 85-kilometre stretch has been suspended till further orders.

Officials said the Sinthan-Anantnag-Kishtwar road also remains closed following administrative orders due to unsafe conditions.

Passengers and transport operators have been advised to prefer daytime travel on the highway and strictly follow lane discipline to avoid congestion and accidents.

The administration has urged people to check the latest traffic and weather updates before undertaking journeys, warning of possible landslides and shooting stones at vulnerable locations.

Farmers have been advised to resume agricultural activities between March 31 and April 2, when weather conditions are expected to remain relatively stable.

Authorities said the situation is being closely monitored and necessary measures are in place to ensure public safety.

Furthermore, the Army and police on Tuesday rescued 34 students and staff trapped in a government school in Watergam area of Baramulla district after flash floods triggered by heavy rainfall inundated the premises, officials said.

The rescue teams evacuated 30 students and four teachers from the hostel after water levels in a nearby nallah rose suddenly.

Officials said the swift joint operation averted a major tragedy, and all those rescued are safe. (KNO)

## LG condoles loss

young lives is heart-wrenching. My deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved families. We stand in solidarity with them during this difficult time," the Lieutenant Governor said.

## 64 Private Member

eyes will be on NC MLA Tanvir Sadiq's bill seeking renewal of leases to existing leaseholders. The bill is listed at serial number four and will be taken up for introduction if proceedings run smoothly.

While most other private member bills are expected to be either opposed by the Government or withdrawn by the members in charge, the Government's position on Tanvir Sadiq's bill will be watched closely—particularly in light of the expiry of leases held by hoteliers in Gulmarg.

The bill has been submitted to counter the impact of the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Rules, 2022.

The new rules, unveiled by the LG-led administration in 2022, stipulate that all leases—except subsisting or expired residential leases, including those granted under the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Rules, 1960, the Notified Area (All Development Authorities in the tourism sector) Land Grant Rules, 2007, or leases expired or determined prior to the commencement of these rules, or issued under these rules—shall not be renewed and shall stand determined.

Such leases, the rules state, shall be put to auction afresh. (KNO)

## Members withdraw

resolves that the promotion of employees especially in Education and Health Department may be based on at least two years service in far flung areas."

Responding to the resolution, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, said that vacancies are being filled up expeditiously and requisite staff will be posted across all hard zones and far-flung areas in coming days.

MLAs Mir Saifullah, Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, Balwant Singh Mankotia and Qaysar Jamshaid Lone moved amendments on the resolution.

Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi, moved a resolution which read, "This House resolves that all measures be taken by the Government to regularize the possession of State land and all types of Shamlat land in use of registered Private and Government educational institutions and till the regularization process is completed to allow such Educational institutions function from present premises without any objection on account of proprietary status of such land".

Responding to the resolution and concerns, the Minister stated that the government has already given extension to the private institutions and assured the Member that the government will look into the matter to provide further relief to the institutions.

MLA Nizam -ud- Din Bhat had moved amendment on the resolution.

Legislator, Mubarak Gul also moved a resolution which read, "This House resolves that considering the alarming degradation of Lakes and water bodies in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, it urges the government to establish a dedicated lakes, water bodies and waterways development authority on the pattern of the Manasbal Lake Development Authority Model, with a mandate for protection, restoration and sustainable development of Khusal Sar, Gilsar, Shallabug Water Body etc".

Responding to the resolution and concerns raised by the Members, Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development & panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments Javid Ahmad Dar agreed upon the seriousness of the resolution and said that the government has taken many initiatives for conservation of lakes and water bodies.

He said that there are already many acts to protect the water bodies and urged the member to withdraw the resolution. He assured the member that the government will take every step possible to stop degradation of the lakes and water bodies.

Legislator, Mir Saifullah moved amendment on resolution.

During the discussion on these resolutions, Legislators Mir Saifullah, Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, Peerzada Feroq Ahmad Shah, Dr. Devinder Kumar Maniyal, Balwant Singh Mankotia, Qaysar Jamshaid Lone, Dr. Sajjad Shafi, Dr. Rameshwar Singh, Iftikar Ahmad, Sajad Gani Lone, Shabir Ahmad Kullay, Pawan Gupta, Rajiv Jasrotia, Tanvir Sadiq, Devyani Rana, Salman Ali Sagar, Nazir Ahmad Khan Gurezi and Shakti Raj Parihar spoke and raised their concerns on the subject. Later, the Members withdrew their resolutions after satisfactory assurances from the government.

### West Asia war

## India managed situation effectively, says Modi; likens Cong to 'political vultures'

PTI

Tharad (Gujarat), Mar 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said while the world is grappling with war, unrest, and rising fuel prices, India has managed the situation effectively due to strong foreign policy and the unity of its people.

He accused the Congress of trying to create panic so that people queue up at fuel stations and gas agencies, likening the party to "political vultures" waiting to exploit the situation (arising out of the West Asia war) and reap political dividends.

"At a time when the world is grappling with war, unrest and rising fuel prices, India has managed the situation effectively due to strong foreign policy and the unity of its people," Modi said while addressing a gathering at Nani village in Vav Tharad district of Gujarat.

He said certain political parties,



mainly Congress, are trying to take advantage of the situation by spreading panic and fear, instead of supporting national unity.

"Today, the Congress party is busy

inciting the people. Like political vultures, it (Congress) is waiting for the situation to escalate so that it can exploit and reap political dividends," Modi added. The Prime Minister

noted that though fuel prices have risen by as much as 10 per cent globally due to the West Asia conflict, the Central government is ensuring that the burden of this impact does not fall upon people.

"The Congress desires to create an atmosphere of panic in the country, hoping that the people will be forced to queue up at petrol pumps and gas agencies," he added.

Modi asserted that India will emerge as a world leader in the renewable energy sector.

He said the circumstances in West Asia have affected every country, but India managed the situation well.

Continuing his attack on the Opposition, Modi said they want to spread anarchy.

"India is capable of facing any crisis. However, Congress is trying to instigate people to queue up at fuel pumps and spread disorder," he added.

## Investors face Rs 51 lakh cr wealth erosion since start of West Asia war; Sensex tanks over 11 pc



PTI

New Delhi, Mar 31: Dalal Street investors have lost a whopping Rs 51 lakh crore from their wealth since the West Asia conflict began late last month, with the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbling over 11 per cent during this time, as investors fled riskier assets due to the cascading effect of the war on crude oil prices and markets globally.

Markets also faced the blow of foreign fund exodus from domestic equities.

Since the West Asia conflict started on February 28, the BSE benchmark has crashed 9,339.64 points or 11.48 per cent.

Tracking the sharp fall in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell by Rs 51,09,498.82 crore to Rs 4,12,41,172.45 crore (USD 4.36 trillion) this month.

"The current bearish trend is largely externally driven rather than fundamentally broken. Elevated crude oil prices, geopolitical risks in the Middle East, and sustained FI selling have created a risk-off environment," Ponmudi R, CEO - Enrich Money, said.

From its all-time high of 86,159.02, the BSE benchmark index is down 14,211.47 points or 16.49 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, surged 4.15 per cent to USD 117.46 per barrel.

Foreign investors have withdrawn over Rs 1 lakh crore from domestic equities in March, making it the worst

monthly outflow, weighed down by escalating tensions in West Asia and a weakening rupee.

Pabitra Mukherjee, Associate Vice President - Technical Research, Bajaj Broking, said, "The four-week period after the onset of the conflict has witnessed the most intense wave of risk aversion since the global market turmoil triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. During this phase, FIIs have been the dominant force behind market weakness, driving sustained selling pressure."

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) executed an unprecedented sell-off in Indian equities during March 2026, marking one of the largest monthly capital outflows in recent history, he added.

"The primary catalyst for this large-scale withdrawal has been escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia, which have heightened global uncertainty and risk aversion," Mukherjee said.

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended the last trading session of the 2025-26 fiscal year over 2 per cent lower on Monday.

"Escalating tensions in West Asia continued to weigh heavily on markets, as the ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran entered its fifth week and expanded across the region," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

## BJP chief Nabin targets Rahul Gandhi over 'appeasement politics'



PTI

Thiruvananthapuram, Mar 31: BJP president Nabin Singh on Tuesday attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of "always appeasing a particular community" for personal benefit.

Speaking after releasing the party's manifesto ahead of the Assembly elections scheduled for April 9, Nabin hit out at Rahul, a day after the Congress leader accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "remaining silent" on the Sabarimala gold loss issue during his visit to Palakkad on Sunday.

Nabin said the people of Kerala were aware of Rahul's "true colours".

"The people of Kerala know about your appeasement politics and that you favour a specific community. For your own benefit, you have always appeased another community," he said.

He further alleged that Rahul was raising the Sabarimala gold loss issue but had remained "silent" when Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin's son, Udhayanidhi Stalin, allegedly insulted the Hindu community and its beliefs.

On Monday, Rahul questioned Prime Minister Modi's alleged silence on the Sabarimala issue.

He said that while Modi speaks about temples and religion wherever he goes, he did not address what happened in Sabarimala during his visit to Palakkad.

Rahul also claimed that the PM "remained silent to avoid damaging the LDF", alleging that this showed the BJP and the Left were "working together".

He added that "Narendra Modi does not care about religion, Hinduism or temples."

## Catholic bishops' body writes to Amit Shah

### Flags concerns over FCRA amendments

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 31: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has written to Home Minister Amit Shah flagging "serious concerns" over the proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), urging wider consultation and safeguards against "excessive state control over civil society".

In identical communications to Shah and Members of Parliament (MPs) dated March 31, the CBCI said the FCRA Bill, 2026, while aimed at strengthening oversight, could upset the "constitutional balance, civil society freedom and the future of charitable service in India".

The bishops' body raised particular concern over provisions that would allow foreign contributions and assets created out of such funds to vest in a designated authority not only in cases of cancellation or surrender of FCRA registration but also in cases of "deemed cessation", including non-renewal of licences.

It warned that this expansion could disproportionately affect organisations whose renewals are denied, especially as the renewal process is "totally controlled" by the Home Ministry. It further said the deficiencies noticed by the department are "not communicated to the association and the associations are not granted an opportunity to make representations regarding the deficiencies on the basis of which the renewals are refused or denied".

## Nalanda University's revival symbol of commitment to re-establish its glory: Murmu

PTI

Rajgir (Bihar), Mar 31: President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said the revival of Nalanda University is a symbol of national and international commitment to re-establish its glorious heritage in a modern setting.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of the university here, she said the ancient Nalanda university had been a great centre of knowledge for about eight centuries, and its fall was a monumental loss not only for India but also for the entire world.

"Its revival is a symbol of national and international commitment to re-establish the university's glorious heritage in a modern setting," Murmu said.

The President expressed confidence that Nalanda University will emerge as a leading global educational institution at a time when the "world faces many complex challenges, and the need for compassionate, independent and critical thinking" is greater than ever.

"At the same time, the benefits of its progress should also reach the society where it is established," she asserted.

The President appreciated the university's community outreach initiatives to connect with traditional knowledge systems.

Murmu congratulated graduating students and said their achievements are the result of perseverance, discipline, and intellectual commitment.

Conferring degrees to the graduates, the President said the students of the institute receive a



"shared inheritance" of humanity.

"Students graduating from here receive two things -- a degree and an inheritance. While the degree is their personal achievement, the heritage of humanity they inherit here is a shared one," Murmu added.

The President also awarded gold medals to 36 students of the Nalanda University.

She expressed happiness that over half of the graduating students this year comprised students from more than 30 countries.

"Today's ceremony is a reaffirmation of a promise that knowledge shall endure, that dialogue shall prevail, and that learning shall continue to serve humanity," she said.

On the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, the President said, "Lord Mahavir and Buddha spread the message of non-violence, compassion and love to the entire humanity from this region of Bihar."

She said that some of the finest minds in the history of Buddhist thought lived and worked in Nalanda.

"For close to eight

centuries, ancient Nalanda was the intellectual heart of Buddhist scholarship in Asia. I am confident that Nalanda University can emerge as a leading global centre for Buddhist studies. I encourage the university to invest in this field with resolve, depth and openness," Murmu said.

The President said that Nalanda University must embody the spirit of enquiry, dialogue, and synthesis to regain its glorious tradition.

"The ancient Indian traditions of learning were never rigid. Instead, they encouraged enquiry, dialogue, and synthesis. Nalanda must once again embody this spirit, and bring together knowledge systems from across disciplines and cultures," she said.

Such a development, the President said, will be in sync with the government's renewed emphasis on holistic, multi-disciplinary, and value-based education through the National Education Policy-2020.

She also took part in a tree-planting event before

the convocation ceremony, and praised the university's commitment towards achieving the goal of net-zero emissions.

"This university reflects a commitment to sustainability in its journey towards becoming a net-zero campus. Institutions of higher learning must definitely lead by example," Murmu added.

She advised the students to "cultivate the habit of enquiry, connect knowledge with service, and remain connected with your alma mater".

"You are ambassadors of this institution," Murmu said.

The President reiterated the government's commitment to supporting the growth of Nalanda University.

"As India moves towards becoming a developed nation by 2047, institutions like Nalanda University will play a vital role in its progress," she said.

Later in the day, Murmu also visited the ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

"President Droupadi Murmu visited the historic remains of Nalanda Mahavihara, a profound symbol of India's rich intellectual and civilisational heritage. Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, these remains reflect the enduring legacy of one of the ancient world's greatest centres of learning.

The preserved remains stand as a testament to the global exchange of ideas, and continue to inspire all," read an X post on the official handle of the President.

## HC dismisses plea challenging Shiv Sena MLA's win in 2024 polls

PTI

Jalna, Mar 31: The Bombay High Court has dismissed a Congress leader's petition challenging the election of Shiv Sena MLA Arjun Khotkar in the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly polls, citing that the plea lacked merit.

The plea filed by Congress's Kailash Gorantyal stated that Khotkar was ineligible as he was the chairman of the Jalna Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC).

Gorantyal, who lost to Khotkar from the Jalna assembly constituency in the polls by more than 31,000 votes.

Justice Kishore C Sant of the Aurangabad bench on Monday dismissed the plea.

Gorantyal had approached the high court, making the Election Commission of India and the returning officer parties to the petition, and raised objections to Khotkar's election. The Congress leader alleged that Khotkar was holding an "office of profit" as chairman of the Jalna Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), which, he argued, made him ineligible to contest the election.

He also contended that the affidavit submitted by Khotkar, along with his nomination papers, was not in the prescribed format.

Advocate S B Deshpande presented an argument on behalf of Khotkar. After hearing both sides, the court observed that the alleged non-disclosure was not a



material fact and did not attract disqualification under Article 191 of the Constitution of India.

It noted that the objections raised were of a trivial and technical nature and that there was no evidence to suggest that voters were misled due to any such non-disclosure.

Even if there was any suppression, it did not materially affect the outcome of the election, the court held, dismissing the petition stating that it lacked merit.

## Centre releases Rs 1,561.53 core for 5 states under JJM 2.0 after reform-linked MoUs

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 31: The Jal Shakti ministry has released funds of Rs 1,561.53 crore for five states under the JJM 2.0 for the financial year 2025-26, following the signing of reform-linked MoUs and fulfilment of mandatory compliance conditions, an official statement said on Tuesday.

According to the statement, Rs 792.93 crore funds have been disbursed for Uttar Pradesh, Rs 536.53 crore for Chhattisgarh, Rs 154.02 crore for Madhya Pradesh, Rs 65.31 crore for Odisha and Rs 12.74 crore for Maharashtra.

The release comes after states committed to key reforms under JJM 2.0, including improved service delivery standards, sustainability measures and community-led management of rural water supply systems.

The ministry said a structured validation system has been introduced to ensure transparency and accountability, with states required to meet financial, technical and data compliance benchmarks before funds are released.

The performance-based mechanism is being implemented for the first time to strengthen outcomes.

So far, 12 states have signed reform-linked MoUs with the National Jal Jeevan Mission under the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

## NOTICE

This is for the information of all the concerned that I want to correct the spelling of my daughter's name and Date of Birth (D.O.B) on her Aadhaar Card as per the school records. If any body has any objection he/she may approach the concerned authorities within 7 days from the publication of this notice.

Actual Particulars

Zunira Shameem

D/o: Shameem Ahmad Ganie

D.O.B: 06-10-2007

Particulars Mentioned on Aadhaar

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## Trump voices frustration with allies as Iran war, strait closure pushes fuel prices higher

Dubai, Mar 31: President Donald Trump expressed frustration Tuesday with allies who have been unwilling to do more to support the US war effort, telling them to "go get your own oil" as the conflict with Iran and its closure of the Strait of Hormuz sent average US gas prices past \$4 a gallon and roiled global markets.

The president's social media tirade came after US strikes hit a city that is home to one of Iran's main nuclear sites, sending a massive fireball into the sky, and Tehran attacked a fully loaded Kuwaiti oil tanker in the Arabian Gulf.

The attacks showed the intensity of the war more than a month after the US and Israel launched their first strikes. The conflict has left more than 3,000 dead and caused major disruptions to the world's supply of oil and natural gas.

Trump, who has vacillated between insisting there is progress in diplomatic talks with Iran and threatening to widen the war, had earlier shared footage of the attack on Isfahan. The central city is home to one of three nuclear enrichment sites attacked by the US in a 12-day war in June, and analysts believe much of Iran's highly enriched uranium is likely stored there.

The war is roiling oil market. Iran's stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway leading out of Arabian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported during peacetime, has driven up global oil prices, as have Tehran's attacks on regional energy infrastructure. That has shaken stock markets around the world and pushed up the cost of many basic goods.

Spot prices of Brent crude, the international standard, hovered around \$106 a barrel Tuesday, up more than 45 percent since the war started Feb. 28.

Trump warned this week that if a ceasefire is not reached "shortly," and



if the strait is not reopened, the US would broaden its offensive, including by attacking the Kharg Island oil export hub and possibly desalination plants.

Israel and the US launch a new wave of strikes on Iran. Israel and the US launched a wave of strikes on Iran, hitting Tehran in the early morning. Israel also said it had launched a new wave of strikes targeting what it described as Hezbollah infrastructure in Beirut.

The video shared by Trump appeared to show a massive attack on Isfahan, and NASA fire-tracking satellites suggest explosions happened in a mountainous region on the city's southern edge. Iran has not confirmed the attack.

A satellite image taken just before the June war suggests Tehran transferred a truckload of highly enriched uranium to a nuclear facility about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Tuesday's strikes.

Analysts believe the truck — which the image showed going into a tunnel loaded with 18 blue containers — likely carried most or all of Iran's stockpile

of uranium enriched up to 60 percent purity. That's a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels.

Iran hits oil tanker in waters off Dubai

An Iranian drone hit a Kuwaiti oil tanker in waters off the United Arab Emirates city of Dubai, sparking a blaze that was later put out, the Dubai Media Office said. Authorities said no oil spill resulted.

Four people were also wounded when debris from an intercepted drone fell into a residential area, and loud explosions could be heard later from another attack on Dubai.

Air raid sirens sounded in Bahrain, while Saudi Arabia said it intercepted three ballistic missiles launched toward its capital. Loud explosions were also heard in Israel not long after the military warned of an incoming missile barrage from Iran.

Trump lashes out at France for failing to support his war effort. In his social media posts, Trump expressed anger at allies that have not given him the support he wants.

He singled out France for not letting planes taking military supplies to Israel

fly over French territory. "France has been VERY UNHELPFUL," he wrote, adding that "The USA will REMEMBER!!!"

The French military has previously said France allowed the US Air Force to use the Istres base in southern France, because it had guarantees that only planes not involved in carrying out strikes would land there.

Italy has refused permission for US military assets to use the Sigonella air base in Sicily for an operation linked to the offensive in the Middle East, an official with knowledge of the matter said, confirming a local press report.

The denial was issued a few days ago and concerned American aircraft, including bombers, which were supposed to land at the base before continuing toward the Middle East, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The Italian government later insisted that its relationship with the US is "solid and based on full and loyal cooperation."

Peacekeepers killed in Lebanon as Israel battles Hezbollah

The UN Security Council planned to convene an emergency session Tuesday after officials said three peacekeepers in southern Lebanon had been killed in less than 24 hours during Israel's invasion there.

The UN peacekeeping mission in the country, where Israel is battling the Iran-backed Hezbollah, did not say who was responsible for the deaths.

In Iran, authorities say more than 1,900 people have been killed, while 19 have been reported dead in Israel.

Two dozen people have died in Gulf states and the occupied West Bank. In Lebanon, officials said more than 1,200 people have been killed, and more than 1 million displaced.

Ten Israeli soldiers have died in Lebanon, including the four announced Tuesday, while 13 US service members have been killed.

## King Charles III to make state visit to US in late April: palace

London, Mar 31: King Charles III will visit the United States in late April, Buckingham Palace said Tuesday, despite some calls for the trip to be canceled or delayed amid the Iran war.

Confirmation of the monarch's first state visit to the US comes at a rocky time for the so-called US-UK "special relationship," with US President Donald Trump repeatedly criticizing Prime Minister Keir Starmer's reticence over the US-Israel war against Tehran.

The trip by the king and Queen Camilla would "celebrate the historic connections and the modern bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States," Buckingham Palace said in the statement.

It would be followed by an official visit to Bermuda which is a British Overseas Territory.

Washington's envoy to Britain, Warren Stephens, warned last week it would be a "big mistake" for the visit to be canceled.

The US leader has repeatedly railed against Starmer since the start of the war, accusing him of not doing enough to support the US.

"This is not Winston Churchill that we're dealing with," Trump said earlier this month, after Starmer initially declined to let US warplanes fly from UK bases to strike Iran.

"I'm disappointed with Keir," Trump

has also said, slamming Starmer's "big mistake."

The visit will be Charles's first trip to the US as king, after he hosted Trump for a lavish state visit last September.

The mercurial US president has frequently expressed admiration for Britain's royal family, which threw him a full state dinner at Windsor Castle, military parades and a flyover during his September visit.

It was an unprecedented second state visit for Trump, who was also hosted in 2019 by the late queen Elizabeth II before her death.

But in his latest broadside aimed at Starmer's government, Trump told countries like Britain to secure the Strait of Hormuz themselves because "the USA won't be there to help you anymore, just like you weren't there for us."

A YouGov poll published on Thursday found nearly half of British citizens opposed the visit to the US, with only a third saying it should go ahead.

Emily Thornberry, a senior MP in Starmer's ruling Labour party, said earlier this month it would be "safer to delay" the visit.

She warned that Charles and Camilla could be left feeling "embarrassed" because of the ongoing conflict.

"Why are we rewarding Donald Trump with a state visit from our king?" asked Ed Davey, leader of the minority opposition Liberal Democrats party.

## Maradona's former home is transformed into a soup kitchen in Argentina

REUTERS

Buenos Aires, Mar 31: Every week, hundreds of people line up to fill a plastic container with food in an unlikely place: the humble home where Argentine soccer legend Diego Armando Maradona was born. The house in Villa Fiorito, a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, no longer belongs to the family of Maradona, who died in 2020 after a heart attack, but for the last month, its current owner has lent its dirt yard to a group of volunteers who light a grill and cook for neighbors.

Last Thursday, Maria Torres stirred a stew in two large pots while several others peeled potatoes and chopped pieces of chicken. A mural painted on the house's facade depicts the soccer player next to the words, "The house of god."

Poverty has been trending downward in Argentina, with official statistics showing it dropping to 31.6 percent in the first half of 2025 from 52.9 percent in the first half of 2024, when President Javier



Milei sharply devalued the peso and inflation spiked. The figures for the second half of 2025 will be published on Tuesday.

While there has been a "very important drop" in poverty, Argentina needs to see more GDP growth in labor-intensive sectors, such as mining, as opposed to capital-intensive sectors, such as agriculture, said Eduardo Donza, a sociologist at the Catholic University of Argentina. The drop in the poverty rate has followed a substantial drop in monthly inflation, from double digits when Milei took office to 2.9 percent in February.

## 75 exhibitors to participate in Indian Sports Goods Fair

### Sports secretary urges rapid expansion

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 31: Seventy-five exhibitors from all over the country will showcase athletic gear, equipment, and apparel for diverse disciplines in the 4th India Sporting Goods Fair (ISGF) amid the government push to position the country as a global hub of sports goods manufacturing. ISGF, organised by the Sports

Goods and Toys Export Promotion Council, was inaugurated on Tuesday and will wind up on April 2 at Yashobhoomi in Dwarka.

The government, for the first time, has allocated Rs 500 crore for the promotion of sports goods manufacturing in its annual budget presented earlier this year.

Exhibitors will be showcasing a diverse range of products

including athletic goods, badminton and tennis equipment, boxing gear, cricket equipment, fitness equipment, sports apparel, indoor sports equipment and toys.

Addressing exhibitors, international buyers and stakeholders on the eve of the fair, Secretary (Sports) Hari Ranjan Rao stated, "This is a golden period in the growth trajectory of India's sports goods industry."



## IPL expresses condolences on death of British broadcast engineer

### Assures help to family



PTI

New Delhi, Mar 31: The IPL governing council on Tuesday expressed deepest condolences on the untimely death of Jan William Langford, a British broadcast engineer who was working with the BCCI for the 2026 edition of the league, and assured help to his bereaved family.

The 76-year-old Langford was found unconscious in his room at a hotel in south Mumbai on Monday morning, following which he was rushed to a hospital by the hotel management. He was declared dead on arrival, an official said.

"The IPL Governing Council and all stakeholders involved express their deepest condolences on the untimely demise of Mr. Ian Williams Langford, a dedicated broadcast engineer, who was an integral part of our broadcast operations. Our

thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends back home," the IPL said in a statement.

"The IPL is committed to providing all necessary support and assistance to Mr. Langford's family during this incredibly difficult time.

"The health, safety and overall security of every member involved in the smooth functioning of the IPL continues to remain of utmost importance," the IPL added in the statement.

Langford was on a work assignment as a broadcast engineer for IPL matches, the official said.

Nothing suspicious was found in his postmortem examination, said a Marine Drive police station official.

A case of unnatural death has been registered, and further enquiries are underway, the official added.

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